

## **Chapter I. Executive Summary**

The National Park Service is implementing a servicewide Inventory and Monitoring (I & M) program at over 270 parks organized into 32 networks. The National Capital Network (NCN) is comprised of eleven National Parks including Antietam National Battlefield, Catoctin Mountain Park, Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park, George Washington Memorial Parkway, Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, Manassas National Battlefield Park, Monocacy National Battlefield, National Capital Parks-East, Prince William Forest Park, Rock Creek Park, Wolf Trap Farm Park, and a segment of the Appalachian Trail. The network is one of the first to receive funding to design a comprehensive long-term monitoring plan. The NCN I & M program is developing the plan by following the recommended seven-step approach outlined by the NPS Natural Resources Information Division. The process includes creating a Board of Directors and a Science Advisory Committee (SAC), sponsoring a Monitoring Workshop, soliciting peer review, and writing a Monitoring Plan.

The final Monitoring Plan will contain a series of chapters that will be completed over a period of several years. Chapter II provides an overview of the network parks and environs, including their significant natural resources as identified by the park staff, park Resource Management Plans and General Management Plans, subject matter experts, and the scientific literature. Chapter III presents conceptual models that represent the network's most important natural resources, their threats, and ecological effects. Chapter IV will present the vital signs or ecological indicators selected by the SAC to monitor the region's ecosystem health. Remaining chapters will include a detailed data management plan, copies of field forms and databases, a discussion of field and analysis protocols, budgets and staffing plan.

The information presented in this document was developed through a series of SAC meetings. The SAC has been meeting regularly since fall 2001 to develop draft conceptual models representing the eight most important resources in the NCN. These resources include Air, Geology, Invertebrates, Landscapes, Rare, Threatened and Endangered Species and Communities, Vegetation Communities, Water, and Wildlife (vertebrates). The models were refined by additional input from subject matter experts during a three-day monitoring workshop held at the National Conservation Training Center in Shepherdstown, West Virginia in July 2002. Over 100 participants representing more than 30 agencies, including several NPS divisions, universities, state and other federal agencies, non-governmental agencies, and individuals, attended the workshop to refine the work initiated by the SAC. Next steps include prioritizing among monitoring goals and objectives that are being developed for each important resource.

This document presents drafts of Chapters II (overview) and III (conceptual models). The expected completion date for Chapter IV (vital signs) is 1 April 2003. The final Monitoring Plan will be completed by 1 April 2004.